



## **Virginia Latino Advisory Board Meeting**

**Thursday - July 26, 2018 9:45am-3:30pm**

**Patrick Henry Building - 1111 E. Broad Street, Richmond, VA 23219**

### **Minutes for Approval**

**In Attendance** Cecilia Barbosa, Damien Cabezas, Victoria Cartagena, Eugene Chigna, Juan Espinoza, Christopher Falcon, Karina Kline-Gabel, J. Michael Martinez, Dania Matos, Louisa Meruvia, Aida Pacheco, Sergio Rimola, Gloria Maria Pena Rockhold, Vivian Sanchez-Jones, Mercedes Santos-Bell, Ana Solorio, Cecilia Williams, Jorge Yinat

**Not in Attendance** Edgar Aranda, Estuardo Rodriguez, Carmen Romero

**Guests** Justin Bell - Assistant Attorney General, Maribel Castaneda - Staff Liaison, Fernando Mercado-Violand - Director of Latino Outreach

**Call to Order** Meeting was called to order at 9:49am. Quorum met.

#### **Comments from Chair, Cecilia Barbosa**

Chair, Cecilia Barbosa welcomed new board members Dania Matos (Williamsburg), Damien Cabezas (Lynchburg), Carmen Romero (absent/Arlington County) and Edgar Aranda (absent/Arlington) and named the reappointments for current board members, Aida Pacheco, Gloria Maria Pena Rockhold and Cecilia Barbosa. Ms. Barbosa also thanked those that have regretfully had to hand in their resignation for their invaluable service to the board: Chris Falcon, Louisa Meruvia, and Diana Vall-Ilobera.

#### **Consideration of minutes of previous meeting (3/2/18)**

Board member, J. Mike Martinez moved to approve minutes, seconded by Board member, Aida Pacheco. Motion passed unanimously. Aida also commended VLAB staff liaison, Maribel Castaneda for her outstanding contributions to the board.

#### **VLAB Excellence in Civic Engagement Award**

Secretary, Karina Kline-Gabel introduced the new VLAB award that will be a charge of the Civic Committee. Discussion prompted the addition of inclusive pronouns and suggestion to add

"community agency/organization" to the description. Assistant Attorney General, Justin Bell, offered his counsel and support for the project.

Board member, Mike Martinez motioned to pursue award proposal with amendments. Board member, Gloria Maria Pena Rockhold seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

### **Latino Outreach Report**

Fernando Mercado-Violand, Director of Latino Outreach introduced himself and shared his experience as a community organizer, with immigration health care outreach and policy work. Currently, he is supporting Deputy Secretary Marvin Figueroa's efforts with Medicaid expansion which will benefit 30,000 Latinos in Virginia. Fernando also hopes his position will be the governmental representative that can help answer questions for the Spanish speaking constituency.

### **Remarks by Governor Ralph Northam**

The Governor began by mentioning the importance of new legislation addressing the expansion of Medicaid. Nearly 400,000 people in VA will have access to health care.

Regarding education, this administration has added \$100 million for higher education and a half a billion dollars to K-12 programs. The Governor also supports second language acquisition and understands that the time to learn a second language is when kids are young so his administration is seeking to make sure all our children have access to a complete education.

Many resources are currently addressing the mental health/opioid crisis; last year 1,227 Virginians were lost to opioid overdose. In August, Governor Northam will travel to medical schools to speak to students/residents about safer innovative ways to treat chronic pain instead of prescribing painkillers.

In regard to national news, the Governor pulled troops back from the border after the family separation crisis and vows that they will not return until reunification happens.

Regarding wages in our state, Governor Northam expressed his desire to raise the current minimum wage of \$7.25/hr to \$15.00/hr since no individual can meet their needs on that amount, much less a family.

In conclusion, Governor Northam asked for the help of VLAB members to educate our communities on voting rights. His administration is pursuing a "no excuse" absentee ballot to make it easier to vote in that manner.

Board member, Aida Pacheco commented about wanting to see Latino representation at all levels of government. Governor Northam responded that we want people who serve on boards and commissions to reflect our society and appreciates and is sensitive to that goal. Board member, Mercedes Santos asked about mental health access in the school system for undocumented children. The Governor's response was that *everyone* needs better access to

mental health services. Board member, J. Mike Martinez asked about security in our schools. The Governor and his wife are looking at introducing a package that includes covering students' immunizations, trauma counseling and school safety. Governor Northam does not believe arming teachers is a beneficial approach to school safety; his new grant includes \$1.3 million to let teachers be educators and pursue other areas to ensure the safety of our schools.

### **Special Announcement by Secretary Atif Qarni, Education**

Secretary Qarni shared positive breaking news with the board. Efforts are underway (see attached memos) to aid students in their goals to attend college. The Secretary and his team will also travel to speak to students and their families to encourage them to pursue higher education. Colleges and universities that will be targeted include those that have a majority of the 9.4% Latino population in the Commonwealth. Secretary Qarni also shared details on the recent Equity Summit. The summit included 85 school divisions and addressed issues such as cultural competency and intrinsic bias. Secretary Qarni addressed questions by VLAB board members:

Q. Is there action to make sure counselors at universities are representing inclusivity? (Louisa Meruvia)

A. Some are doing a good job with multiple language access but we are tracking this as much as we can.

Q. Question about the list of colleges and universities. Is it exhaustive? Why doesn't it include GMU or JMU, for instance? (Chris Falcon)

A. The Secretary and his team are visiting areas with the greatest population of Latino students. A partnership between GMU and NOVA is helping students to transition from community college to a 4-year institution. The team could use the help of VLAB members in regard to communication about this program. If the team receives invitations to speak to students, they will do so (40-50 students minimum should be in attendance).

Q. Suggestion that these visits include the families in these conversations.(Aida Pacheco)

A. Secretary Qarni agreed.

Q. Excitement was shared on the opportunity for partnership on these efforts between the Secretary and his team and VLAB members. (Juan Espinoza)

A. The Secretary fully agreed.

### **FOIA Training**

Justin Bell, Assistant Attorney General presented a thorough explanation on FOIA (Freedom of Information Act). FOIA is a federal law and is meant to promote access for the public and keep

them engaged in what its government is doing. Primarily, FOIA mandates how to keep and access records and hold meetings.

As VLAB members, all are entitled and encouraged to ask Mr. Bell any questions regarding FOIA. Cecilia Barbosa asked that she and Maribel Castaneda be copied on Board communication regarding FOIA. The FOIA Council (866-448-4100 or [foiacounsel@dls.virginia.gov](mailto:foiacounsel@dls.virginia.gov)) will also address any questions. VLAB members are reminded that one is always better off deferring to compliant side, if an issue is in question. For more details, Mr. Bell's presentation is attached.

### **Public Comment**

No public comment

### **Fall Forum Update**

Mercedes Santos-Bell, Vice-Chair presented on the upcoming Community Forum which will take place Saturday, November 17, 2018 in Hampton VA from 10am to 2pm. Fernando and Victoria will be helping with arrangements. There will be *no* board meeting combined with this event; however, Cecilia Barbosa encouraged committees to meet following the event.

### **Committee and Annual Report Overview & Guidelines**

Chair, Cecilia Barbosa presented our charge to prepare a report for the Governor. Reports will follow deadlines as proposed in the attached handout. Cecilia invited committee chairs to comment on this document. She asked that any statutory recommendations to be considered at the next General Assembly be identified immediately. During the afternoon meeting, committees are to identify their top priorities and complete an action plan. Committee members are encouraged to view a collaborative document (Google Drive) but, to be FOIA compliant, should not participate in contemporaneous dialogue with other members while making comments on the document.

### **Census Presentation**

Ronald E. Brown, Partnership Specialist at U.S. Census Bureau ([ronald.e.brown@census.com](mailto:ronald.e.brown@census.com)) presented on the 2020 Census and focused on some of the challenges and differences the upcoming census will address (i.e., citizenship question on ballot, using online response systems). The Census will take place April 1, 2020 but offices will be open as early as April 2019. Education on the census is critical to ensure participation. The population count can mean federal dollars for VA since population count helps support funding (i.e., Loudoun County has received federal dollars to build infrastructure every year due to the increase in their population). The three ways to participate will be online, by mailing census form, or give information through toll-free telephone numbers. Anyone who wants to work for the census bureau must apply online at [www.usajobs.com](http://www.usajobs.com). Mr. Brown encourages VLAB members to help

by contacting schools, public libraries, and other agencies to encourage them to make time available for people to be able to come and fill out census ballots online.

Questions regarding the confidential and privacy laws for census information were addressed as well as the language used in the forms (i.e., "legal" vs "documented").

### **Secretary & Agency Head Comments**

The following summarize remarks by Secretaries and Agency Heads on their current objectives.

Secretary Atif Qarni, Education reiterated his earlier comments and how his department is addressing accessibility and completion rates. His team will be focused on: expanding early education to underserved populations; the children's cabinet; promoting equity throughout the continuum (K -20); career pathways; and health sciences.

The department of Secretary Kelly Thomasson, Commonwealth, among other charges, handles pardons, extradition, notary/authentication, board appointments, and representation for Native American tribes. Secretary Thomasson gladly reported that last year, under Governor McAuliffe, more Latinos were appointed to boards than in any other period of time. The presence and work of staff liaison Maribel Castaneda will also help in efforts to increase Latino appointments to our 300 state boards. Secretary Thomasson will also be working closely with Mr. Brown on the 2020 Census.

Deputy Secretary Marvin Figueroa, Health and Human Resources is currently focused on enrollment for health insurance and overseeing behavioral health services. Deputy Secretary Figueroa is also working on a benefit package for the 360,000 Virginians who will be eligible for Medicaid coverage as of January 1, 2019.

Deputy Secretary Grindly Johnson, Administration focuses on human resource management and open access to government. The department focuses on ensuring that agency jobs represent a diverse population and reflect on the overall population of the Commonwealth. Currently no diversity officer exists in the department, but the DHRM is addressing inclusive practices and there will be a Diversity EEO (Equal Employment Opportunity) position soon.

Erik Johnston, Director of Housing and Community Development works with local government and non-profits to find ways to revitalize low-income communities. His department also staffs the Governor's Homelessness Council. Director Johnston explained the importance of funding for housing support services to complement Medicaid expansion. Community development and downtown revitalization project grants are available through this department and significant new partnerships to help with broadband accessibility in the Commonwealth are also underway. Programs such as Main Street (Affiliate, Downtown, or Opportunity Zones Program) models and GO VA are also under this department.

Tracey Jeter, Director, Small Business Supplier Diversity described her relatively new agency as one that provides advocacy and technical assistance tools for operating and growing small businesses. The agency also provides loans and grants for small businesses.

After presentations, VLAB board members addressed the panel with comments and a general question on how more Latinos can be employed in upper level jobs in governments.

Secretary Kelly answered that she keeps encouraging Latino candidates to apply to boards and state government.

Secretary Qarni expressed that although there are Latino appointments in state government, there is a problem with representation of leadership (i.e., no Latino superintendents in school systems in VA, GO Va, The Business Council, Council of University Presidents). He encouraged VLAB members to communicate to these agencies the need to include the Latino population in positions of leadership.

Director Jeter expressed that although it has been challenging to make sure there is diversity in her department, she is proud of their cross generational gender/cultural mixed team. She believes it is critical to be intentional and make a push for a diverse pool. A plan with leadership at the top is crucial.

Board member, Dania Matos reiterated that having diverse leadership at the top is the driving factor in attracting and hiring members of the Latinx community at all levels of employment. Each administration unit needs a diversity action plan and accountability with the edict coming from the top leaders.

### **Committee Meetings**

The Business, Civic Engagement, Education, Health, and Housing Committees met to discuss priorities for the year.

### **Final Comments & Adjournment**

Justin Bell re-addressed FOIA requirements and made some suggestions for meetings:

- have the quorum (over half) meet live and then telepresence in the others
- chair could be an extra committee member for any committee
- emails for VLAB should be used for VLAB communications

Chair, Cecilia Barbosa suggested that board members create a Gmail account for VLAB communication (i.e., vlabgloriar@gmail.com, karinakg.vlab@gmail.com) Click [here](#) to set up new Gmail account.

Committee chairs, Mike, Eugene, Sergio, Jorge, and Karina presented their 3 priorities with the board.

### **Meeting was adjourned at 3:35pm**

**Important Upcoming Dates:** Governor's Reception Sept 24,2018; VLAB meeting Sept 24 or 25, 2018; Community Forum November 17, 2018 at Hampton University

Minutes Submitted by Karina Kline-Gabel, Virginia Latino Advisory Board, Secretary